

this. I've just literally not been asked about it.

I have been very well-pleased with the treatment that my nominees for the Cabinet have received who have gotten their hearings and been taken to a vote. There are still some who have not gotten a hearing yet, and let me mention in particular Tony Lake. We've now answered all the questions that we've been asked. We've sent it up to the committee. And I think he ought to be given a hearing and a vote.

And I'd like to remind everybody involved in this that it was Tony Lake who came up with the strategy that we implemented to end the bloodiest war in Europe since World War II. He was a terrific success as the National Security Adviser to the President. He has worked in these fields for 30 years. He fully understands the intelligence operations. He is superbly qualified. If someone has some reason to oppose him, let them oppose him in a hearing and then in a vote on the floor. But in view of his service, not to me but to this country, and the positive consequences of that service, whether it's Bosnia, Haiti, the agreements with Russia, you name it, he deserves—his service to this country deserved a hearing and a vote on the floor of the Senate. And I hope he will get it.

Thank you very much.

Q. [Inaudible.]

The President. Well, I obviously feel that way about that, but you know, you've got this on the record about that. I think she'll sail through if we ever get her to a vote. The same thing about Secretary Peña. But I wanted to—I'm on the record, I think, with Alexis. I just wanted to be on the record with Tony.

NOTE: The President's 135th news conference began at 4:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Martin S. Indyk, U.S. Ambassador to Israel, and Abu Marzook, alleged HAMAS terrorist.

Statement on the Killing of a British Soldier in Northern Ireland

February 13, 1997

I am grieved and outraged by the callous killing of a British soldier in Northern Ireland yesterday. The First Lady and I extend our

deepest sympathy to the soldier's family and to the British Government and people on the loss of this young man. We wish the authorities success in bringing the murderers swiftly to justice.

All those who care about the future of Northern Ireland must join me in condemning this cowardly crime. I remain convinced that the people of both of Northern Ireland's traditions want to take the path of peace and reconciliation, not hatred and violence.

The Belfast talks chaired by Senator Mitchell continue to have my full support. I urge all those taking part, who share a commitment to democratic values, to move as rapidly as possible into substantive negotiation about the future of Northern Ireland.

The loyalists and their leaders have shown great courage and restraint in not allowing themselves to be drawn into an escalating spiral of violence. I urge them to remain steadfast.

Remarks on Receiving the "Adoption 2002" Report and an Exchange with Reporters

February 14, 1997

The President. Thank you very much, Olivia. Ladies and gentlemen and boys and girls, thank you all for being here. I also want to say a special word of thanks to some Members of Congress who are not here today but who have done an enormous amount of work on this issue, including Senators Rockefeller, Chafee, and DeWine, and Congresswoman Kennelly and Congressman Camp.

Let me begin by also saying Happy Valentine's Day. All the kids look wonderful. The rest of us look all right, too—[laughter]—but the kids look especially wonderful.

I want to thank you, Olivia, for the work you've done. And I want to thank the First Lady for the work she has done on this issue over more than 20 years now. I'll never forget the first conversation we had, shortly after we were married, about a case that she had involving a child in foster care who wanted to become an adopted child. I didn't know very much about it before then, and ever since then this issue has been of consuming

interest to me because of what I learned through her. And I thank her for that.

We know that our children's fundamental well-being depends upon safety and stability, that without these, children have a very hard time in this complicated, challenging world of ours. We know that far too many of our own children are indeed now in danger in the homes in which they live. The public child welfare system was created to provide a temporary haven for those children but not to let them languish forever in foster care.

As you heard Olivia say, we have nearly half a million of our children in foster care today. Nearly 100,000 will never return to their original homes. Many of those children still will never know what it's like to live in a real home until they grow up and start their own families. But it does not have to be that way. We can find adoptive and other permanent families for waiting children like these fine children who have joined us today and the children whose valentines you see hanging behind me and here in front.

In December I asked the Department of Health and Human Services to come up with an aggressive legislative and administrative strategy to double the number of children we move from foster care to permanent homes annually by the year 2002 and to move them there much more quickly. I'm proud to say that the Department went to work to produce this blueprint for achieving our goal.

Now we have to move quickly to put this plan into action, so that no child is deprived of a safe and permanent home for even one day longer than necessary. Every agency of every State, every family court, every case worker in the country must understand that children's health and safety are the paramount concerns of the child welfare system, especially when determining whether to remove a child from his or her home or return them there. We'll work with Congress to make sure the law explicitly reflects this priority. We'll issue guidelines to the States so there will be no question as to the law's meaning.

Second, to meet the goal of moving 54,000 children into permanent homes in 2002, we'll work with States and set yearly targets. We'll give them, as my balanced budget does, \$10 million a year for the next 3 years to give

them the assistance they need to State agencies, courts, and communities to devise such a system. We'll also have \$10 million to establish competitive grants for States to develop model strategies for moving children from foster care to permanent families.

Third, we'll propose legislation that gives States bonuses, as Olivia said, for every child that is adopted over the prior year's total, with even larger bonuses when the child has special needs. The balanced budget will start paying for these bonuses, but we know they'll pay for themselves, since foster care costs far more than adoption. This isn't just cost effective—of course, it's the right thing to do.

Fourth, to achieve our goal of moving children more quickly, we'll work with Congress to shorten from 18 to 12 months the time a child waits for the first hearing. And we're going to call it a permanency planning hearing, so that there's no mistake as to its purpose.

Fifth, to give credit for model strategies that are working, we'll give national awards for excellence every year in November, National Adoption Month.

Finally, we'll redouble our efforts to make sure no child of one race is deprived of a loving home when a family of another race is prepared to give it. That is illegal and wrong and often hurts our very neediest children. The Department of Health and Human Services will continue to ensure that States are meeting their obligations under this law.

Putting this plan into action today will mean that we are ensuring that no child will languish in foster care when loving families are out there ready, willing, and able to open their hearts and their homes. This is just one part of our strategy to guarantee the well-being of our most vulnerable children. By giving States the flexibility to develop their own strategies, we're moving closer to achieving that goal.

I'm proud to announce that we have approved Ohio's request for a waiver in dealing with their child welfare system. This is the fifth of its kind, and there will be more to come. It gives Ohio the authority to design and to test a managed care approach to improve child welfare services and move children out of foster care more quickly.

By working together across party lines at every level of government, in businesses, religious groups, communities, and in our homes, we can make sure that every child in America grows up in a safe and nurturing home. That is a goal every American should be proud to support. That is a gift of love we can make to all of our children, and if you look at the children here today, it's hard to think of anything more important we could be doing to say, Happy Valentine's Day.

Thank you.

[At this point, the President and the First Lady greeted the children, and then the President took questions from reporters.]

American Airlines Labor Dispute

Q. Mr. President, both sides of the American Airlines dispute seem to keep putting the ball into your court. How do you feel about being put into that position? Both sides of the dispute seem to keep putting the ball into your court.

The President. They need to go back to work. They've got a few more hours of work to do.

Q. Let me put it this way: What's the upside and the downside of your acting one way or the other?

The President. I'm going to have a meeting on this later this afternoon to get an update, and then I think I should make myself available for questions after I see where we are in a couple hours.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

February 8

In the evening, the President attended a farewell reception for Clinton/Gore '96 fi-

nance chairman Terence McAuliffe at the Hay-Adams Hotel.

February 9

In the afternoon, the President and Hillary Clinton attended a performance of "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992. On the Road: A Search for American Character" at Ford's Theatre.

February 10

In the morning, the President traveled to Annapolis, MD. In the afternoon, he returned to Washington, DC.

February 11

In an evening ceremony in the Oval Office, the President received diplomatic credentials from Ambassadors Baktybek Abdrisaev of the Kyrgyz Republic; K.M. Shehabuddin of Bangladesh; Andrew Nicolaides of Cyprus; Bernardo Vega of the Dominican Republic; Juan Carlos Esguerra of Colombia; Andrew Sharp Peacock of Australia; Napolioni Masirewa of Fiji; Rex Stephen Horoi of the Solomon Islands; and Madame Akosita Fineanganofa of Tonga.

The President announced his intention to appoint Richard R. Parizek to the Nuclear Waste Technical Review Board.

The White House announced that the President, while on a working visit to Capitol Hill, had a telephone conversation with Senator Richard C. Shelby concerning the nomination of Anthony Lake to be Director of Central Intelligence.

February 12

The President announced that he appointed Harold Ickes to serve as director of the 1997 summit of the world's major industrialized nations, which will take place in Denver, CO, June 20-22.

The President announced his intention to designate Ken Kennedy as Co-Chairman of the Advisory Committee on High-Performance Computing and Communications, Information Technology, and the Next Generation Internet. He also announced his intention to appoint persons as members: Eric A. Benhamou, Vinton Cerf, Ching-Chih Chen, David Cooper, Steven D. Dorfman, Robert Ewald, David J. Farber, Sherrilynne S. Fuller, Hector Garcia-Molina, Susan Graham, James N. Gray, W. Daniel Hillis, David C. Nagel, Raj Reddy, Edward H. Shortliffe,